

**Statement of  
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**House International Relations Committee  
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights  
and International Operations  
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Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate this opportunity to testify before you this morning. And I am grateful to be able to share with you my insights about world hunger -- a topic that I feel passionately about. We have a moral obligation to work to reduce hunger around the world; and doing this also helps us achieve other important foreign policy objectives.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge other guests testifying here today. In particular, Mr. Jim Morris, executive director of the World Food Program, who traveled from Rome, Italy -- where I was based until recently -- to share his tremendous expertise in how to meet the needs of today's 850 million hungry people. He also happens to lead one of the best-run UN agencies in the world.

Mr. Chairman, before I go any further, I want to commend you and this subcommittee for your commitment to the needy and poor people of the world. From Darfur to Pakistan, from Southeast Asia to the Horn of Africa, decisions made in this subcommittee have helped rescue millions of people from the brink of starvation. The United States is the world's greatest humanitarian benefactor, and your work has in part allowed our country to claim such a distinction.

**USUN Rome**

Less than two months ago I completed my assignment as Ambassador to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture. It was a high honor to serve my country for more than three-and-a-half years, and to be able to take on the problem of hunger every day. I led a small but effective U.S. mission, powered by a dedicated team of Foreign Service Officers from three

agencies -- State, USDA and USAID -- who helped to elevate the United States to a new level of respect among the UN agencies in Rome.

Much of what I will discuss today is gleaned from my experiences as ambassador, but these are personal accounts, and personal conclusions. I don't want there to be any misunderstanding. I am not speaking on behalf of the State Department. That said, I am sure that my colleagues who serve in the Department under the leadership of Secretary Rice share many of the conclusions I have drawn.

For more than 20 years, I have had a profound passion for helping the world's poor and hungry. As we sit here this morning, the clock is ticking for the 25,000 people who will die today, 16,000 of who are children. To put it another way in just over one week, the equivalent of my entire hometown of Dayton, Ohio, would be completely wiped out.

Helping the hungry and poor is not a desk job. You have to see for yourself how hunger dismantles otherwise productive lives, and too often destroys them. I have traveled to more than 100 countries --- most of them war-torn, politically and economically instable, and caught in a desperate cycle of hunger.

During my time as Ambassador these trips helped me to better understand the needs of the poor. They also won me greater credibility among my fellow permanent representatives to the UN, because they knew that I had seen the situation first hand. They knew that my call to action on a particular food crisis was based on the facts.

But the most important outcome from my collective field experience is that it has confirmed my faith in the gift of food as a means of saving lives and rebuilding livelihoods. I am therefore proud of America's food aid programs around the world. We are doing a lot. But we could do still more. Feeding the hungry is not just the right thing to do. It also helps create a safer and more secure world for all of us.

### **Kenya: Emergency Aid in Action**

The last trip I made as Ambassador was to the Horn of Africa, where a drought has plunged millions of lives into crisis. Driving in Northern Kenya, where the people depend on livestock for most of their food needs, I saw

dead cattle scattered across the landscape. I saw thatch roofs almost completely stripped from huts – evidence of families’ need to feed their cattle at the expense of a roof over their heads. Men, women and children who could no longer survive on their own were trekking across the bone-dry land, walking for several days to the nearest village, in the hope of finding food.

Further down the road there was a hopeful sign. We stopped to visit a warehouse operated by the non-governmental organization, Oxfam. Inside, we saw rows upon rows of USA food bags piled 10 feet high. The United States was among the first donors to the Kenya drought. To date we have given close to 100,000 metric tons of food aid, worth more than \$65 million.

That afternoon, we met some of the district’s youngest recipients of our aid program. At Wajir Elementary School we found a long line of children waiting for their fortified maize porridge. This would be their only meal of the day. You can imagine that under difficult drought conditions, school attendance actually rises. “Many of us came to school through drought,” said one of the teachers. Families know that their children will be fed a good meal, and it’s one less mouth for them to feed at home.

### **Feeding the Hungry While Starving Extremism**

The Horn of Africa is at the center of one of today’s most urgent humanitarian situations. But I bring it up for another reason, too. It also happens to be a region where the harsh conditions and decades of civil strife mean that extremism is a serious concern. Wajir District – one of the areas I visited in Kenya – lies on the porous Somali border. It receives a steady stream of refugees from the lawless territories to the north, which are also a potential home base for extremist and terrorist groups.

Now, what do you think it means to that hungry family in Wajir to know that their child is being fed every day in a U.S.-funded school feeding program? If the child returns home each day with a full mind and full stomach, is he likely to succumb to extremist influences?

Our assistance programs must be targeted toward the most vulnerable – irrespective of color or creed. But we should also recognize the link between poverty, fragile states and extremist activity. Our food aid can be a stabilizing force in places where families live on the edge.

## **Food Aid as a Motivator**

Our food aid does so much more than fill stomachs. It's an incentive for women to get training and education that helps prevent them from becoming victims of human trafficking. Around the world, food-for-work projects are helping communities reforest mountains stripped of their trees, construct small-scale irrigation projects that will help farmers become self-sufficient, and rebuild infrastructure destroyed in natural disasters. It is helping them build dams, train teachers and terrace hillsides.

Food-for-work programs can be an effective mobilizing force in places afflicted by poverty and underdevelopment. Food is a powerful motivator, and even preferred over cash. This is particularly true in unstable places where rampant inflation can rapidly undermine the purchasing power of bills and coins. A bag of lentils, on the other hand, holds its value. Sometimes food aid is practical for other reasons, like in Albania, where I met women who were afraid that if they were given cash for their work on a road-building project, their husbands would squander the earnings on liquor.

## **Food Aid and HIV/AIDS**

As food aid is a means to motivate hundreds of people at a time, it has an equally powerful impact on helping those living with HIV/AIDS resist the debilitating effects of the virus.

In the United States, HIV-infected people can live comparatively normal lives because they have access not only to drug therapy, but to good nutrition. We take this for granted. But in Africa, even if you are among the minority who are receiving anti-retroviral treatment, your days are still limited given the lack of your intake of nutrients. A person who is HIV-positive cannot stomach the drugs without an adequate nutritional status. We need to make sure that our investment of millions of dollars for PEPFAR are closely linked to a food aid component.

We are getting better at this. I visited several places just in the past year where food aid and drug therapy programs were closely linked. In Zimbabwe, I witnessed a food distribution program for home-care volunteers, improving prospects for the AIDS victims in their care. In the slums of Nairobi I met toddlers who would long have left this earth if it

weren't for the nutrition they were receiving from a food aid program. In many cases, our food aid is doing more than just keeping people alive. It's also allowing wage earners to continue to work and provide for their families.

### **“From the American People”**

U.S.-supported food aid is having a significant impact around the world. Many recognize this; but we could do more to get the word out. Those red, white and blue bags are unmistakable. The words “From the American People” are being translated into local languages. More and more, the recipients I meet in the field know exactly who supplies them with food. I'll never forget arriving in Darfur, at a camp that was estimated to hold more than 115,000 refugees. In this desolate, dusty place there had been a delivery of USA food bags, stacked tall and ready for distribution. A spontaneous chant began, “USA, OKAY! USA OKAY!” I don't think the children and parents I met that day will forget which country brought them help in such bounty.

But we need to do better. When I traveled, I always made sure that journalists went out into the field with me. It has had a tremendous impact on public perceptions. We've generated hundreds of positive headlines about U.S. assistance, and we've forged relationships with correspondents who cover these issues daily. When we travel to the field with the press, we make a positive statement without saying a word. Once the journalists see the piles of food bags, once they talk to volunteers who dole out the rations, once they see smiling school kids with fingers sticky of fortified porridge, they begin to understand and appreciate in a very personal way the human impact of U.S. assistance.

### **Next Steps**

In 2005, U.S. donations to the World Food Program increased by \$200 million, thanks to the Bush-Blair announcement last summer of an additional \$624 million in funding. The G8 brought unprecedented focus on Africa, complete with last summer's simultaneous rock concerts and major celebrity attention. Countries that once received food aid, like India, have become donors.

Unfortunately, we are a long way from reaching the Millennium Development Goals that have been endorsed by the world's leaders. To reduce hunger by half by 2015, the number of hungry people needs to fall by 22 million per year. Currently, it is falling only by 6 million per year, according to FAO statistics. And yet, global food aid donations are shrinking, not growing.

One in every five people in the developing world is chronically undernourished. Every year, nearly 11 million children die before they reach their fifth birthday, almost all of them in developing countries. They don't die of starvation per se. More typically, they die of communicable diseases that ravage their weak systems. They are too malnourished to fight back.

For me, this is the greatest tragedy. Children in the developing world are being born underweight because their moms are undernourished. Without adequate food during infancy, children succumb to frequent infections and their growth may become stunted. The children are less capable in school because of prolonged malnutrition. In adulthood, they in turn raise children who are born into the same cycle of malnutrition.

Kids can't focus in school if they are not fed. The poverty perpetuates. How will Africa rise to its economic potential as a trading partner if the vast number of its youth can't stay awake in school? If we care about these kids, and if we're serious about ending the cycle of hunger and poverty, then we need to be feeding the children who don't fall under pre-existing government programs.

It is an incredible thing to see a child receiving a meal at school. I hope that all of you have a chance to witness it for yourselves. For me, when I return from a trip to Africa, the images that are most vivid in my mind are of the children who burst with energy because they are being fed in school. I have seen, even in the most depressing slums of sub-Saharan Africa, ebullient children chanting and singing about how they've improved in their studies because of school feeding. Their smiles do not lie.

For me, this is where our political and spiritual will must be directed. We can create a new generation of productive young adults if we invest in them now. Then some day, maybe this generation will be telling their grandchildren about their youth, in the "olden days" when kids had to be given food aid.